

## House Republican Press Release

December 2, 2005  
Press Office: 860-240-8700

### **Rep. Stripp Opposes Flawed Campaign Finance “Reform” Bill**



State Representative John E. Stripp opposed a campaign finance bill that passed the state House of Representatives early Thursday morning on a mostly party-line vote, saying it “had so many loopholes it looked like Swiss cheese.”

“If the majority Democrats had supported the amendments we offered to strengthen this bill and eliminate provisions that favor incumbents and preserve many of the flaws in existing campaign finance law, I might have been able to support it,” said Rep. Stripp, R-135<sup>th</sup> District. “Instead, they rejected our proposals, which were intended to further reduce the influence of special interests in the election process and level the playing field between entrenched incumbents and challengers seeking to unseat them.”

“Although the bill’s supporters claim it will not use taxpayer dollars to pay for election campaigns, it does indirectly tap the state’s General Fund for just that purpose. When General Fund revenues are used to fund political campaigns, it means fewer dollars are left to pay for critical state programs such as open space preservation and aid to local school districts. Faced with the alternative of cutting funds for state programs or raising taxes, the state legislature’s majority Democrats have almost always chosen higher taxes,” Representative Stripp said.

“This measure discriminates against minor party and petitioning candidates and favors incumbents because it requires candidates for state office to raise a certain amount of cash through small private donations before they can qualify for state campaign funds. Fund-raising has never been a problem for entrenched incumbents. It has always been a major obstacle for those who seek to unseat them. It perpetuates the disadvantages faced by third party or petitioning candidates by requiring them to “buy in” the same way major party candidates do, but in most cases, would provide them with significantly less state campaign dollars than candidates from the two major parties would receive at the initial qualifying level,” Representative Stripp said.

“Although the bill prohibits candidates from accepting contributions from companies who have contracts with the state and from lobbyists, it fails to impose similar restrictions on in-kind contributions from state employee unions, who provide campaign and election workers to candidates for the General Assembly and other statewide offices in anticipation of favored treatment from them after they are elected. It is a major loophole

that any campaign finance reform bill worthy of the name should have closed,” Representative Stripp said.

“The bill also reinstates the ‘old political boss’ concept by allowing the minority and majority leaders of the House and Senate to form political action committees that can accept money from both union and corporate PACs. These ‘leadership PACs’ can be directed to use money in unlimited amounts to support favored legislators who have toed the line on votes important to caucus leaders. The provision is a significant departure from one of the most highly-touted objectives of the legislation – taking special interest money out of state politics,” Representative Stripp said.

Representative Stripp noted that the administrative costs the law would impose on taxpayers could amount to about \$10 million over the next 10 years. Each candidate for the state House of Representatives would receive \$25,000 in state funding for their general election campaigns if they qualify for the grants by raising \$5,000 from individual contributions of \$100 or less. Candidates for the state Senate would receive \$85,000 to cover their general election campaign expenses after raising \$15,000 in seed money from individual contributions of \$100 or less. During a gubernatorial election year, when the governor, constitutional officers (such as the state treasurer and state attorney general) and all members of state House and Senate are running, the total cost of the candidate subsidies will be more than \$20 million, Representative Stripp said.